

RECREATION

Project title: **Interpretive Impacts from the Participants' Perspectives**

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Objective: The proposed study will investigate the nature and meaning of meaningful interpretive experiences by analyzing subjective accounts of recollected meaningful interpretive programs collected from visitors to two nationally significant interpretive sites. Studying the most meaningful interpretive encounters will provide insight into interpretation at its best for the participants. Based on the accounts of the informants in this study, a model of the elements of meaningful interpretive experiences will be developed which can be used to inform the creation and evaluation of interpretive

Findings: Two hundred visitors waiting to see Old Faithful erupt during the period from August 19 to August 21, 1999, provided the researcher with contact information (name, address, and phone number), signed informed consent statements, and received a copy of the informed consent statement. By December 31, 1999, phone interviews had been conducted with 40 of these subjects. The interviews are currently being transcribed. There has been no analysis done on these interviews yet.

Project title: **The Evolving Social Construction of Wolves: Exploring Yellowstone National Park Visitors' Social Interactions with *Canis Lupis***

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Objective: This study explores visitors' perceptions of wolves, how these perceptions are shaped, the

nature of the wolf watching experience, and how these issues influence social conflict over wolf reintroduction and management. Using a social constructivist approach, this study is analyzing the in-depth interviews to explore: 1) the public's social constructions of wolves in various contexts; 2) the nature of the recreational experiences individuals seek with respect to wolves; 3) how current social conflicts are affecting public perceptions; and 4) how new opportunities to interact with reintroduced wolf populations affect people's perceptions of wolves in the future. The goal of the study is to identify and describe the range of experiences and meanings associated with wolf watching.

Findings: From July 1999 through September 1999, 21 in-depth interviews were completed. These interviews ranged from 10 minutes to one and a half hours long, with the average interview lasting between 30-40 minutes. Another 10 interviews are expected to be completed between January and March 2000. The interviews occur in the Lamar Valley, an area where wolf sightings are prevalent. Although analysis is ongoing, the nature of the insights that are being revealed include the dynamics of the wolf watching experience, the broader meanings of the Yellowstone wolves, and how this experience is incorporated into the participant's life and into the total Yellowstone National Park experience.